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PICTURE FRAME

The present invention relates to framing and hanging pictures.

It is well known to frame pictures, including prints, posters and photos, to improve the aesthetics of the picture and to provide means by which the picture may be hung on a wall. However, many of the frames currently available are relatively expensive due to the precise work involved in producing a suitably shaped frame. Further, in order to provide support for the picture to enable it to be hung on a wall, frames are generally produced from rigid materials such as wood and metal, and accordingly storage and transportation of frames is limited by the fixed shape of the frame. This affects not only the frame itself as originally produced but also the framed picture if it is later desired to transport the framed picture.

Accordingly, there is a need for a picture framing and hanging system which is relatively inexpensive and easy to transport.

According to a first embodiment, the present invention provides an apparatus for framing and/or hanging pictures which comprises one or more framing portions, wherein the or each framing portion is made from a flexible material and is adapted so as to have a first position in which it can be freely moved from a substantially flat conformation to other conformations and a second position in which it is secured in the shape of a three-dimensional shape.

In the first position, the or each framing portion can easily be stored and transported. As the framing portion is made from flexible material, it can easily be bent, rolled or folded as required to enable ease of storage or transportation.

In the second, secured position, the or each framing portion has a fixed shape which is three-dimensional. This provides the or each framing portion with a degree of rigidity and strength that results in the or each framing portion being

able to provide sufficient support for a picture in order to enable it to be hung on a wall.

Preferably, the apparatus comprises one, two or four framing portions. When one framing portion is provided, it should be of a size such that in use it can be placed along the top edge of the picture. Preferably it is of a size such that in use it runs along all or substantially all of the length of the top edge of the picture.

When two framing portions are provided, they should be of a suitable size, such that in use one can be placed along the top edge of the picture and the other can be placed along the bottom edge of the picture. Preferably they are of a size such that in use they run along all or substantially all of the length of the top and bottom edge of the picture respectively.

When four framing portions are provided, they should be of a size such that in use one can be placed along the top edge of the picture, one can be placed along the bottom edge of the picture, one can be placed along the left hand edge of the picture and one can be placed along the right hand edge of the picture. Preferably they are of a size such that in use they run along all or substantially all of the length of the top, bottom, the left hand and the right hand edge of the picture respectively. Preferably in the second position an end portion of each framing portion meets, and is most preferably secured to, an adjacent end portion of the adjacent framing portion. This assists in providing the apparatus with suitable strength and rigidity to support a picture when hung on the wall as well as increasing the aesthetics of the apparatus.

It is preferred that one or more of the framing portions is provided with suitable means such that it may be hung from a wall. For example, one or more holes or other such recesses may be provided. This allows the framing portion to be hung from a wall by means of picture hooks, nails, screws or the like protruding from the wall. Clearly such holes or recesses should be located along the length of the framing portion such that when they are used to hang the framing portion from a wall the framing portion hangs straight. For example, one hole may be provided at the centre of the length of the framing portion or two holes may be provided

equidistant from the centre of the length of the framing portion. Any other suitable means as known in the art for hanging frames from walls may also be used. Preferably, the framing portion is provided with securing means for securing the portion in its second, secured position in the shape of a three-dimensional shape. Preferably, releasable securing means are used. Releasable securing means as known in the art may suitably be used, for example the framing portion may be provided with a flap and corresponding slit system. Any suitably shaped and sized flaps may be used; the flaps may be, for example, semi circular, triangular or rectangular. The framing portion could alternatively be suitably provided with corresponding sets of male and female components such as press studs that may be releasably secured together. Preferably, the securing means are spaced regularly along the length of the framing portion.

Preferably, the or each framing portion is of a shape such that when in its second, secured position it is in the shape of a regular three-dimensional shape. For example, the or each framing portion may be a triangular prism, circular prism or rectangular prism shape when in its second, secured position. When there is more than one framing portion, each framing portion may be the same or different shape in its second, secured position; preferably they are all of the same shape. The or each framing portion may be provided with score lines to assist the folding of the portion into the three-dimensional shape.

The or each framing portion may be made of any suitable flexible material. For example, the or each framing portion may be made of a flexible plastics material such as a polypropylene or a flexible material such as cardboard.

In use, the or each framing portion may be attached directly to the picture which it is framing. Accordingly the apparatus of the first embodiment may further comprise a picture to which the or each framing portion may be attached. Alternatively, the or each framing portion may be attached to a backing portion, with the picture being framed being secured to the backing portion. Accordingly, the apparatus of the first embodiment may further comprise a backing portion, for example a piece of cardboard or paper, to which the or each framing portion may be attached.

The or each framing portion may be attached to the picture or to the backing portion by any suitable means, for example by means of adhesive. The or each framing portion of the apparatus of the first embodiment may therefore be provided with attaching means, for example a layer of cured or substantially cured adhesive covered with a protective removable layer which can be removed when adhesion is required.

The or each framing portion is attached to the picture or backing portion at the part of the framing portion which in the second, secured position, is the base of the three-dimensional shape.. The picture with attached framing portion(s) or the backing portion with attached framing portion(s) can easily be stored or transported by placing the or each framing portion into its first, unsecured position. Due to the flexibility of the material of the or each framing portion, the or each framing portion together with any picture or backing portion can be rolled up so as to fit in, for example, a tubular packaging for storage or transportation.

A packaging means may be provided integrally with the apparatus for framing and/or hanging a picture. The packaging means may be made from a flexible material and is adapted to have a first position in which it can be freely moved from a substantially flat conformation to other conformations and a second position in which it is formed into a package.

Preferably the flexible material is one of the materials as described in relation to the framing portions. The packaging means is preferably secured in the second position by any suitable releasable securing means. For example a zip (metal or plastic), male and female connectors or a flap 15 and corresponding slit system.

The package formed is preferably tubular, the flexible material of the packaging means is preferably releasably or permanently secured to the framing portions. The flexible material of the packaging means may in the first position form a backing portion for the framing portion(s), and in a second position form a tubular package around the framing portions for storage and transportation.

When the picture with attached framing portion(s), or the backing portion with attached framing portion(s) which may have a picture secured thereto, is to be hung on a wall, the or each framing portion is placed into its second, secured position by folding the flexible material of the framing portion into the three-dimensional shape and securing it in this position by means of the securing means provided. If the framing and/or hanging apparatus is integral with a packaging means then the packaging means is placed in the first position before the or each framing portion is placed in the first position.

According to a second embodiment of the present invention, a framed picture is provided which comprises one or more framing portions as described above attached to one or more edges of a picture. The framed picture may suitably comprise one framing portion attached to the top edge of the picture, or two framing portions attached to the top and bottom edges of the picture respectively, or four framing portions attached to the top, bottom, left hand and right hand edges of the picture respectively.

The or each framing portion of the framed picture is, in use, in its second, secured position such that the or each edge of the picture having a framing portion attached is provided with a frame border in the shape of a three-dimensional shape.

At least one of the framing portions of the framed picture is provided with means for hanging the picture from a wall as described above. Preferably, at least the framing portion attached to the top edge of the picture is provided with such hanging means.

Preferably, the framed picture is provided with four framing portions, such that each edge of the picture is provided with a framing portion.

If it is desired to store or transport the framed picture of the second embodiment, the or each framing portion may be placed in its first, unsecured position by unsecuring the securing means and unfolding the portion so that it is in a substantially flat configuration. The framed picture can then be rolled up for easy

storage or transportation. Any packaging means can be secured in its second position as a package for the framed picture.

The present invention also provides a method of framing a picture, which method comprises attaching one or more framing portions as described above to a picture, with the or each framing portion being located at an edge of the picture.

The present invention will now be described in more detail with reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a diagram showing a picture framed using an apparatus according to the present invention, with the framing portions in their first, unsecured position; and
Figure 2 is a diagram showing the picture of figure 1 with the framing portions in their second, secured position.

Figures 1 and 2 show a picture 1 framed using a framing apparatus comprising four framing portions 2. The framing portions 2 are attached to the edges of the picture 1, with two shorter framing portions 2a being attached to the top and bottom edges of the picture and two longer framing portions 2b being attached to the left hand and right hand edges of the picture. The shorter framing portion 2a attached to the top edge of the picture is provided with a hole at the centre of its length, on the back, to allow the picture 1 to be hung from a wall.

The framing portions 2 are provided with semi-circular shaped flaps 3 and corresponding slits 4, and with scored lines 5. When the flaps 3 are not secured in the slits 4, as shown in figure 1, the framing portions 2 are flexible and may be substantially flat or may be bent or rolled.

Accordingly, in this first, unsecured, position the framed picture may be rolled up to allow ease of storage or transportation.

When the framing portions 2 are folded along the scored lines 5 and the flaps 3 secured in the slits 4, as shown in figure 2, the framing portions form rectangular

prism shaped frame edges around the picture 1. Accordingly, in this second, secured, position the framed picture is well supported and aesthetically pleasing, and may be hung from a wall using the hole provided in the back of the slot framing portion 2a located along the top edge of the picture 1.